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ABSTRACT

Composing the first volume in a proposed series, the eight papers collected here focus on the general theme of allowing children to have a childhood. The first paper urges that educators of young children communicate that they, as professionals, believe in and act on the basis of principles of child development. The second paper points out how schools may deprive children of childhood by excessive testing, homogeneous grouping, overuse of worksheets, fragmenting the curriculum and schedule, excessive drill, and large amounts of sitting and listening. The third paper suggests that children are involved in the process of reading before they enter school and offers suggestions for teacher education and beginning reading programs. The fourth, fifth, and sixth papers respectively suggest ways of using television to enhance children's language development; discuss play as a natural medium for learning in early childhood; and provide an illustrated overview of Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories of moral development, discussing a simple strategy to promote such development. The seventh paper stresses the importance of emphasizing hearing-impaired childrens's development as children rather than emphasizing their handicap. The eighth and final paper discusses child advocacy in terms of its elements, nature, and goals. (RH)

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The Wesleyan Papers:

KEEPING THE CHILD IN CHILDHOOD

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North Carolina Wesleyan College

June, 1983

This volume is dedicated
to the prospective
and practicing
educators
of the
North Carolina Association for the
Education of Young Children.

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The Editorial Committee,
Shirley C. Raines, Ed.D., Editor
Deborah A. Butler, Ed.D.
Marshall A. Brooks, Ph.D.
Lutricia Z. Murphy, Typist

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Preface:

THE WESLEYAN PAPERS: KEEPING THE CHILD IN CHILDHOOD is the first volume of a series North Carolina Wesleyan College's Department of Education will publish on timely topics which affect the quality of life and learning of the children whose lives we touch by preparing their teachers. The first theme, "Keeping the Child in Childhood," is the 1983 conference theme for the North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children.

The authors whose articles appear in this volume were invited to submit manuscripts by virtue of their expertise and their intense commitment to children.

In the first article, "Who Are We in the Lives of Children?" I have urged that we write a message to our colleagues, school and program administrators, and legislators that we know the principles of child development and shall practice our profession with those principles serving as the basic tenets. In "Robbing Childhood," Gary and Maryann Manning have stated six assaults on childhood which result when we do not practice the profession based on sound child development principles but allow: 1) test mania to become rampant; 2) homogeneous grouping; 3) use of worksheets; 4) fragment the curriculum and schedule; 5) drill and 6) too much sitting and listening. In "Beginning Reading Programs: How Can We Begin What Has Already Begun?" Robert J. Canady describes alternatives to the assaults on childhood in the area of reading and asks instead that we respect children for the knowledge they already possess when they enter school.

The most formidable medium of television has intruded on the child's world and while many parents and teachers view television's influence as one of the reasons children are being robbed of the innocence of childhood, Rebecca Isbell and Jean Flanigan suggest some ways to use television to children's benefit. One of the criticisms of television is that it takes time away from children's play. Cindy Davis and Richard Brice's article "Play: A Natural Medium for Early Childhood Education," focuses attention on the reasons for play, one of which is that we can help children retain their childhood. Another of the criticisms of television is that children are not interacting with each other. Children need to interact with each other. Marshall A. Brooks in "Teacher Please! I Need to Do It Myself," describes the interaction children require to develop moral reasoning. He offers a strategy which, as in previous articles, respects children and helps them gain valuable experiences through interactions with peers.

Again, the theme of respect threads its way through the writing of Phyllis Chalk and Joyce Kirchin as they call our attention to the needs of the exceptional children. The authors' basic premise in "They are Children FIRST" is that the hearing impaired child is a child first and secondly a child with a handicap. The exceptional child needs advocates to receive quality service; likewise, Bobbie Rowland in "Advocacy for Children" charges us to become a most compelling and constructive force for all children. And it is with her challenge that we end our first volume.

"All our children, yours and mine, are a natural resource and have the right to grow to be healthy, functioning, and productive citizens. Public policy ought to encourage and support this growth, and private policy ought to insure that any gaps or omissions are promptly identified and provided for."

It is the hope of the editorial committee that this first volume which is filled with messages from our profession to our profession will, indeed, charge us to become advocates for children by keeping the child in childhood.

Shirley C. Raines, Editor

WHO ARE WE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN?

by
Shirley C. Raines
Associate Professor and
Coordinator of Early Childhood Education
North Carolina Wesleyan College

WHO ARE WE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN?

When Sally Struthers (1983) stares at me from the pages of a magazine and asks for eighteen dollars a month to feed a hungry child through the Christian Children's Fund, I ask myself, "Who am I in the lives of children?"

When Marian Wright Edelman, (1983) President of the Children's Defense Fund, implores me with horrendous statistics to defend the needs of children to my legislators, I ask myself, "Who am I in the lives of children?"

When David Elkind (1983) in his best selling book urges me not to hurry the child and Neil Postman (1982) in his best selling book accuses me of removing the innocence from childhood, I ask myself, "Who am I in the lives of children?"

When our President of NAEYC, Bettye Caldwell, (1983) urges me to accept the challenge of educating the American public about the profession of early childhood education and child care, I ask myself, "Who am I in the lives of children?"

Collectively, we of the North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children must ask ourselves, "Who are we in the lives of children?" Stephanie Feeney and Doris Christensen published an introductory text to teaching which uses as its title Who Am I in the Lives of Children? This question leads us to reflect on our professional lives, individually and collectively.

When we attend conferences and converse with our colleagues, we quickly learn that the people who attend already are committed to many just and worthy causes. We have families, teach Sunday School,

lead volunteer efforts; we are the pillars of the community. The Sally Struthers ad from the Christian Children's Fund, the statistics from Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund, the best-sellers about children and childhood, and the appeals from NAEYC, strike responsive chords in us because we are committed to many just and worthy causes; we do care.

"But I am convinced if we are ever to attain those lofty ideals shouted from conference and convention podiums, if we are ever to reach those treasured goals written in Greek and Latin on the emblems of our learned societies, we must follow our concerns with action"(Raines 1983). We must follow our declaration of how much we care about children and about our profession with action in which we share the responsiblity of the messages we hear about children, not just the messages we hear from Sally Struthers, Marion Wright Edelman, David Elkind, Neil Postman and Bettye Caldwell, but our own message.

The following three examples illustrate caring and illustrate the basic principles of child development which are the messages we must write for children and for our profession.

The story of Randy and the muddy shoes is one of my delightful stories of children learning. As many of you who teach kindergarten know, tying shoes is a big deal in kindergarten. We have the children practice tying each other's shoes, work with lacing frames, and even have adult sized shoes for them to tie. Tying shoes even had a place to be checked under fine motor skills on the developmental checklist I used when I taught. And tying shoes had a prominent place on the bulletin board. We had a list of all those five year olds who knew how to tie shoes. We applauded and cheered each child's accomplishment and made a ceremony of adding each name to the list, but Randy's name was

not on the bulletin board. I even mentioned to his parents Randy's adequate development of fine motor control with puzzles, tinkertoys and drawing, but he had not learned to tie his shoes yet. They said they would have him practice at home, but the end of the school year came and Randy still had not learned to tie his shoes.

In September, on one rainy muddy Monday morning, I arrived at school early and rushed to my classroom to prepare those extra activities I knew would be needed for a rainy day. I was busy at my worktable when suddenly I saw two wet, dripping, muddy, tennis shoes plopped down right in front of me on top of the red construction paper. Just as I turned to say, "What do you mean splattering my paper and my blouse with those awful shoes?," I saw two big brown eyes and the widest smile and heard Randy say, "I did it! I tied my shoes!" And there they were, wet, muddy, dripping, and tied.

As educators and child development professionals, we often are guilty of an over emphasis of some small tasks and overlook the wholeness of the child. We often expect all the spaces to be checked on the developmental profile and all the names added to the board, but we must be certain to write the message to parents, to children, to administrators, and to program designers, that we follow the basic principles of child development. We must write the message:

"Development is continuous, gradual, and orderly"

(Lay-Dopyera, Dopyera 1982).

It doesn't stop the day we give the Metropolitan or the California Achievement Test, or check the spaces on the locally designed developmental checklist. Realizing this, NC-AEYC must be quite concerned about programs, teachers, principals, and parents who make decisions about program and grade placement for September

on the basis of a test given in March. That practice is adverse to all we know about the development of young children.

Another principle of child development which we must write as our message is that:

> "Development proceeds from the general to the specific. Throughout the life span, human beings responses become more detailed and specific," (Lay-Dopyera, Dopyera 1982).

This principle, must be recalled when we absurdly have young children remember each letter sound and expect them to string all those sounds together to read words and sentences on topics of which they have no understanding. Children must have material to learn to read which has meaning for them first, as in the language experience approach, then we can move to the specific of the parts.

Another principle of child development which we must write as our message is that:

> "Growth and development vary among individuals. While general patterns of development are predictable, each person has an idiosyncratic pattern"(Lay-Dopyera, Dopyera 1982).

We seem to have lost sight of this basic principle when we want all the spaces on the developmental check list checked by March, all the scores of all the children reaching 1.5 grade level on the reading test, or all the children filling in all the blanks on the same page of the kindergarten math workbook on the same day.

What are the messages we must write? The message from teachers and parents are the delightful stories of children learning, but it is more. It is the message that we believe and act upon the principles of child development.

We can enjoy as teachers those delightful stories of children, but

there are times when we cry with parents. Yet, the tears are not enough. We must communicate our sympathy and empathy and then information. As a Head Start director I recall workers and teachers who cried with families at the news of another surgical operation for a handicapped child. But the tears were not enough, they followed their caring with actions. Their message was written with information about services, follow-up assistance with arrangements, referrals, transportation to rehabilitation centers, and with counseling.

I also recall fondly those role-models and mentors who gently guided me in the first year of teaching children, in the first year as a program director, and in the first year of college teaching. We of NC-AEYC have a message to write as mentors, as role-models, as gentle guides through the anxieties of first experiences. The message to the fledglings in our profession is that of information we share from real-life experiences, from research, and from plowing deeply into the writings of great thinkers and educators who have influenced our profession. The message that we care is written with information, practical, theoretical and applied, which helps in the struggles of new jobs.

We are the writers of the message that we care. We are the writers of the message of the principles of child development, the message of information, the message of role-model and mentors. But we are more. To other concerned citizens, we offer our volunteer efforts to join together in a united way to advocate for children because we know Marian Wright Edelman's statistics. To parents, we offer our expertise because we are the professionals and we want parents to recognize and select quality programs for their children so they may become discerning, as well as concerned, parents. We show them quality. The mark of excellence is evident in our centers, schools, programs and services. To the new

members of our profession we show them by example what it means to believe in staff development and continuing education. We attend the conferences, enroll in the courses, complete the degrees, and design and execute the research. We write the message that there is more to learn, that growth and development are gradual and continuous for the child, but also for the adult.

As we continue to learn, as we develop gradually and continually, as we lead our profession, we need a source to guide us. Dr. Robert Canady (1983) retells an incident that Mario Montessori, Maria Montessori's son, told a group of teachers from California, which illustrates the need for a source to guide us. When Maria Montessori was quite old, in fact just before her death, a world-wide assembly of Montessori educators met in India. After many days of conferencing and listening to long speeches filled with numerous accolades, the finale for the assembly was an address by Dr. Montessori. As she approached the podium walking very slowly, a hush fell over the crowd. Near the end of her speech in which she traced the development of Montessori education throughout the world, Maria Montessori stepped from behind the podium and pointed her finger at the absolutely silent audience and after a long pause said, "For many years I have been pointing to the child, and you have been looking at the end of my finger."

As professionals, as leaders in this state, as role-models for those people beginning their careers, we must be careful that in our search for new methods, new techniques, new strategies, new products, new kits, new software, that we look to the child, not at the end of our fingers.

When asked, "Who are we in the lives of children?" We must answer. We are the persons who respond to the Sally Struthers' pictures of poor children because we do want the basic needs of all children met - for we

are pointing to the child. We are the documenters of needs, the collectors of statistics for Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund and for legislators - for we are pointing to the child. We are the researchers who seek answers, who replicate and validate new and old information - for we are pointing to the child. We are the interpreters of the Elkind, Postman, and Caldwell positions on the child, childhood, and the profession - for we are pointing to the child.

"Who are we in the lives of children?" We are the writers of the message: "We care." And our declarations of caring are followed by actions, for we are more than celebrators of muddy tied shoes and all the other small triumphs of a child's learning. We are more than empathizers with parents for all the anguish children and parents suffer in their struggles. We are more than providers of guidance for those who enter our profession. We are the writers of the messages of our profession.*

*Paper adapted from the author's keynote address to the Spring Conference of the Knoxville Area Association on Young Children, April 9, 1983.

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ROBBING CHILDHOOD

BY
Gary Manning and
Maryann Manning, Professors
The University of Alabama in Birmingham

ROBBING CHILDHOOD

Childhood is a wonderful time of life which is filled with the building of sand castles, swinging on tire swings, and the singing and playing of songs and games. How wonderful it is when children are loved and respected, and come to love and respect others in turn. However, childhood can also be marked by hunger, abuse, and deep emotional pain. Sadly, adults often remove the child from childhood.

Schools sometimes rob children of the joys of childhood. Some of these sad practices of which schools are often guilty: too much testing, homogeneous grouping, too many purple ditto sheets, fragmentation, excessive drill, and a large amount of sitting and listening. Let's eliminate or minimize these six assaults on childhood.

Assault #1-Testing

Test mania is rampant. Tests mandated by politicians, public officials, and school superintendents bombard children, teachers and schools. As a result of early testing, the curriculum often consists of children "getting ready" to take tests rather than engaging in meaningful and creative learning activities.

Although the authors are opposed to current testing practices, they are not opposed to the evaluation of children's learning. This evaluation must focus on the importance of children's natural interests and activities rather than paper-pencil tests. Piaget (1963) addressed the problems of testing by stating:

> In short, the test method (standarized testing) has it uses, but for the present problem it tends to falsify the perspective by diverting the child from his natural inclination. It tends to neglect the spontaneous interests and primitive (but important) reactions of the child as well as other essential problems.

Similarly, Perrone (1975) stated that normative testing and other narrow evaluation measures limit children's growth as learners because so much time is spent on what is measurable, not on what is meaningful. These ideas suggest that testing is harmful, in large part, because it directs attention away from children's own interests and from learning that is meaningful to them.

Fortunately, professional organizations for children and youth of all ages are taking active roles in this important area. ACEI/NAESP lent support to a call by NEA for a moratorium on the use of standarized intelligence and achievement tests (Perrone, 1976). Educators must re-think the entire range of evaluation issues, especially examining their educational purposes. Minimum competency tests and norm-referenced tests need to be replaced with student self-evaluation, work portfolios, interviews, goal checksheets, conferences and other process-oriented evaluation procedures.

Assault #2-Homogeneous Grouping

Homogenous grouping, once limited to the upper grades, is increasingly being used with children in the early years, often on the basis of test scores. Young children are being assaulted by this type of grouping which has many negative results, including a lack of stimulation by peers.

The negative effects of ability grouping have been widely discussed in the literature. Research studies generally suggest that ability grouping does not improve pupil learning of academic material. In fact, Findley and Bryan (1970, 1975) reported that ability grouping has negative effects upon the achievement and self-concepts of low-ability students. Additionally, Good and Brophy (1971) found that teachers actually teach low groups more slowly and expect less of them. This low expectation limits the opportunities

of lower ability students. Similarly, studies by Goldberg, Passow and Justman (1966) indicate that teachers underestimate the capabilities of pupils in lower ability classes, expecting less of them, teaching them less, and thereby contributing to less learning. Consequently, children who are low achievers as measured by a standarized achievement test and who are grouped together in classrooms are actually being cheated by the school system supposedly dedicated to the full development of each individual.

Why then do we use ability grouping when much evidence tells us that it is not the answer to meeting the needs of individual children at any age? Some educators group according to the abilty because they think it is easier to teach. Others do so because it provides a ready, yet unjustified, explanation for why some children do not achieve.

Obviously, heterogeneous grouping is more desirable. The best learning environments are achieved when classrooms are composed of children with different abilities, interests and experiential background. There is no doubt that children learn from each other and benefit from peer stimulation. Schools should group not only heterogeneously at a single age level but across age levels, referred to as multi-age, family or cross-age grouping.

Assault #3-Worksheets

What a tragedy to find children in preschools and kindergartens with purple sheets to complete before they can play! The worksheet and its first cousin, the workbook, are more and more in evidence in classrooms for young children. The purple sheets dampen children's interest and enthusiasm for learning and stifle creativity.

Children need a variety of experiences to help them differentiate

their worlds. Unfortunately, worksheets often constitute the entire curriculum in the area of mathematics, with the result that students have little or no opportunity for manipulation of materials. Children profit from opportunities to do more than simply look or watch; they need environments that will allow them to explore (Brophy, Good and Nedler, 1975). Furthermore, according to Piaget's evidence and theory (Ginsburg and Opper, 1979), all students of a given age level do not and cannot learn essentially the same material. Piaget stressed that concrete experiences must come first with young children. The current emphasis on worksheets simply does not allow for an environment that encourages concrete experiences and exploration.

Children must not enter the classroom to be greeted with thick packets of math worksheets. The "purple passion" sheets, which deprive children of opportunity for exploration and discovery, should give away to manipulative devices such as Cuisenaire rods, counting frames and beads. At the same time, teachers should increase the verbal interaction between them and their pupils as well as pupil-to-pupil interaction.

Assault #4-Fragmentation

Too often, we walk into a classroom and see a schedule indicating that the curriculum has been dissected into many parts. For instance, the language arts curriculum has been separated into handwriting, phonics, grammar, reading, writing, spelling, etc. In some curriculum areas educators also break learning into numerous fragmented skills, as evidenced by the lengthy skill continua and checklists used in many school systems.

This fragmentation results in activities that are purposeless and meaningless to children. Children move from one activity to another according to a rigid schedule, which prevents them from pursuing their

interests on a long-term or in-depth basis. Moreover, children are robbed of the joys of experiencing something as a total process when, for example, they are forced to study a single word or part of a word or even a single sound.

Children of all ages need large blocks of time to follow their interests. Within an integrated format, children have time to explore their interests and to move from one area of learning to another in a natural way.

Assault #5-Drill

Many young children spend an inordinate amount of time each day using flashcards, staring at computer terminals, and working other materials and equipment designed for quick right answers. These practices are often an outgrowth of the desire for children to do well on tests. Some educators mistakenly believe that, if children can memorize and verbally state facts or recite concepts, they understand their meanings.

Too much time is spent, according to Beck (1973), "cramming children with mental food that they cannot yet digest." For many young children, time could be better spent on developing understanding of those same things. In support of this Kagan (1971) wrote:

> The child, like the adult, thrives on variety he can handle, resents manipulation, desires autonomy, tries to discern his place in the world, and enjoys understanding.

Some school administrators, aiming at higher test scores, have implemented highly structured, drill-oriented programs because of favorable research reports on these programs. True, some highly structured language and math programs show significant gains in test scores, but caution must be exercised in application of such findings. According to Jackson, Robinson and Dale (1977), "some of these programs may do a long-term disservice to children by restricting their opportunities to practice the language they already know in relaxed conversation with peers and teachers."

Educators who force children to engage in thememorization of specific skills may be inhibiting the natural development of young children. Internalization of concepts best occurs when children can continue to verify their own findings in environments that include a variety of materials scheduled in large blocks of time, to encourage exploration and discovery.

Assault #6-Sitting and Listening

It is distressing to see rows of children sitting quietly, allowed to speak only when they raise their hands for permission. It is even more distressing to realize that in some schools children are not allowed to speak in the lunchroom or the halls!

Too many administrators and teachers value quiet behavior. This emphasis reveals their lack of understanding about how children learn and develop. Evidently such educators do not believe that interaction with peers and teachers contributes greatly to the thinking and language development of young children.

Contrary to the beliefs of such educators, children must have opportunities to interact frequently and naturally with their peers. The implications of Piaget's view, as reported by Ginsburg and Opper (1979), are that children must interact with one another in the classroom. Conversing, sharing experiences and arguing with one another are major tools that assist them in acquiring knowledge.*

Educators must improve the curriculum in schools for young children. Too often we are silent and do not speak on behalf of children when boards of education, school administrators, professional groups, teaching colleagues, and others make decisions which potentially have a negative effect on the development of children. Most educators are committed to

improving the quality of life of children but that in itself is not enough. Let's stop the assaults on childhood; thus, keeping the child in a childhood.

*Printed with permission from, "The School's Assault on Childhood," Childhood Education, 58 (November/December, 1981). 84-87.

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BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS:
HOW CAN WE BEGIN WHAT HAS ALREADY BEGUN?

by
Robert J. Canady
Associate Professor of
Reading and Elementary Education
Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma

BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS: HOW CAN WE BEGIN WHAT HAS ALREADY BEGUN?

Most educators agree that reading ability is the most important determinant of school success and failure. Helping students become proficient readers is the goal of every elementary school teacher, and yet, each year many students leave the third grade with the ability to say words, but unable to understand what they are reading. These students have mastered the mechanics of reading, but they do not understand the "process" of proficient reading.

Since the teaching of reading, and even the definition of reading, has become controversial among educators, it is wise to clarify what one means by the terms "reading," "proficient reading," and "the process of proficient reading." For the purposes of this paper the following definitions will apply:

reading - gaining meaning from print

proficient reading - recreating the meaning intended by the author

process of proficient reading - scanning the print, making a prediction as to the meaning of the print based on reader's past experiences, confirming prediction through further samples of print, synthesizing information collected to comprehend author's message (comprehension is always relative to reader's own experiences).

It is the intent of this paper to show: (1) that the process of proficient reading has already begun before children come to school; (2) that teacher education programs should concentrate less on methods of teaching beginning reading and more on understanding the process of reading; and (3) that "beginning reading" programs in the school should be organized around the reading experiences already encountered by the children.

I believe that the major problem in reading programs today is that

beginning reading instruction is incompatible with how we believe, or say we believe, children learn. The planning of most learning activities for young children in our school is heavily influenced by cognitive learning theorists Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget. The person who has had the strongest influence on our schools' reading programs has been behaviorist B. F. Skinner. Montessori and Piaget arrived at their conclusions about how children learn and develop through intense observations of children in natural learning situations. They agreed that children learn through interacting with their environment, through a continuous process of hypothesis testing, or as Piaget has stated, through assimilation and accommodation.

Recent research, by psycholinguists who have observed children learning to read naturally without formal instruction, supports Piaget's theory that reading, like all other knowledge young children acquire, is learned through the process of assimilation and accommodation. The fact that most reading programs are still based on a behavioristic, stimulus-response theory of learning reflects the failure on the part of teacher education programs to make this new information regarding "natural" reading available.

Since I believe that observation of the learner is still the best way to evaluate learning and to plan for new learning experiences, I will support the three major points of this paper by citing examples of children I have observed in natural learning situations.

1. I have stated that children have already experienced the process of proficient reading before they enter school.

   Example - While shopping with his mother a young child observes an object he has never see before. He scans the object searching for significant features which will give him a clue as to the function, or meaning, of the object. He observes the four

short legs and long flat top of the object. His brain processes the information and confirms that the object is probably a short legged table.

Just as the child is ready to accept the object as a table, two adults walk over and sit down on the object. "Wait a minute," the child thinks, "Adults don't sit on tables. It must be a chair. But it is too wide for a chair and besides it has no back."

His mother is tugging at his hand to move on, so the child quickly creates a new "category" in his mind to store this strange object. The category is for low, wide chairs with no arms and no backs. Later he learns that the label for his new category is "bench."

As the child moves through the shopping center he observes a yellow sign with black letters on it. He has learned that signs usually convey a message which is associated with the objects or events surrounding that sign. He has learned that print represents meaning. He scans the area around the sign searching for the meaning the sign represents. He sees some water on the floor and a mop bucket nearby. "Don't go that way," his mother cautions, "you might slip on the wet floor and hurt yourself."

Suddenly the child points to the sign and says, "Wet floor-hurt self." The young child has demonstrated that he is not only aware that print represents meaning, but that signs contain limited or "significant" information.

When children learn to search for significant information in print to gain meaning, they have learned one of the essential requirements or "skills"

of proficient reading. Few children enter school without this basic knowledge of the reading process. It is only after many weeks of reading readiness lessons and decoding skills lessons in the school's reading program that many children "learn" that reading is a letter-by-letter, word-by-word decoding process and that meaning is not as important as "accuracy" in reading.

2. The emphasis in preservice and inservice teacher education programs must change from methods of teaching reading to understanding the process of reading.

When we put teaching methods and standardized tests aside and take a close look at what readers do when they read, we find that proficient readers skip words, substitute words, and make logical guesses at words they do not know in order to gain meaning from print. Poor readers, on the other hand, stumble through the print word-by-word and letter-by-letter and feel extremely guilty if they skip or substitute a word. To poor readers meaning is the "final reward" for saying the words correctly.

Example - One summer I was tutoring a boy who had been retained in the eighth grade because of his low reading scores. I watched as he painfully "decoded" a paragraph from a fifth grade science book. At the end of the paragraph he gazed at the ceiling as though waiting for a message. When I asked what he was doing he said, "I'm trying to figure out what is said." I asked him if he always read a whole paragraph and then waited for the meaning to come to him. His answer was a simple, "Of course."

A third grade girl who was accustomed to being asked comprehension questions after reading a selection was asked instead to tell the teacher everything she could remember about what she read. After a long pause the girl began to cry and

said, "I can't think when I'm reading!" After further examination the teacher found that none of her third grade slow reading group could "think while they read."

A first grade girl who was reading quite well when she entered school was given her own book to read at home in an attempt by the teacher to individualize the little girl's reading instruction. The following day the teacher asked the little girl if she had started the book yet. "Oh, yes," was the reply, "I finished it!" The teacher, doubting that the little girl had read the entire book, asked what the book was about. The teacher was astonished when the little girl gave a complete analysis of the book and she apologized for doubting that the little girl had read the book. The little girl admitted that she too, had a confession to make. She looked down at her desk and said, "I didn't really read every word."

3. Lessons in beginning reading programs must capitalize on what children already know about reading when they enter school.

Example - The success of the language experience approach in beginning reading is well documented. Through the use of dictated stories, experience charts, and book making, children are able to move comfortably into the school's reading program without separating reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Children also need activities in their beginning reading program which are planned around "environmental reading," the reading they do as part of their every day lives. Teachers who include signs, labels, candy wrappers, cereal boxes, T.V. commercials, etc. in their beginning reading programs help the children continue a reading experience that was begun by the

children long before they came to school. Environmental reading activities at school help to extend the reading program outside the classroom and make it possible for parents, who may be poor readers themselves, to help their children at home. But parents must be shown the value of environmental reading. They must be shown, for instance, that each trip to the supermarket can be a reading experience for their child and they must realize the significance of pretend reading and writing.

One parent, a poor reader herself, had three older children in school, all with serious reading problems. She was delighted to find that she could help her younger daughter by pointing out the print that surrounds them in the home and in the neighborhood. As the parent expressed, "Gee, I didn't know that was reading."

There exists in most schools today a gross ignorance about how children learn to read and about the nature of reading itself. Ask many teachers what learning theory or philosophy about reading instruction their school's reading program is based on and they will tell you which basal reading series their school has adopted. Ask them about the process of reading and they will show you their sequential reading skills chart. The truth of the matter is that most reading instruction, the most important subject in the school's curriculum, reflects a behavioristic learning theory, a learning theory which most teachers say they are opposed to, and is being based on outdated information concerning the process of reading.

It is the responsibility of teacher education programs to provide current information to preservice and inservice teachers regarding psycholinguistic research and the reading process. Reading teachers don't need more "how-to-do-it information." They need a better understanding

of reading as a thought/language process. They need to understand that the reading process and the learning process are one in the same and that the evaluation of a reader must measure more than the number of mistakes made, it must also measure the reader's ability to use the process of reading. Until reading teachers possess all of the information currently available concerning the process and the evaluation of reading, they are working under a severe handicap and improvement of the school's reading program is unlikely.

The purpose of this paper was to show (1) that children are involved in the process of proficient reading before they enter school, (2) that teachers need more information concerning the process of reading, and (3) that the reading experienced by the child before entering school should be considered in the school's beginning reading program. Below are some suggestions for teachers of beginning reading regarding the purpose of this paper:

1. Realize that reading, even beginning reading, is not an exact letter-by-letter, word-by-word decoding process.
2. Without comprehension there is no reading, but comprehension is relative to each child's personal experiences. Ask your readers to express alternative interpretations of the author's meaning.
3. Never teach decoding skills in isolation. Whatever skills you feel are necessary for reading can be taught through meaningful "whole language" activities.
4. Understand the process of reading. After reading the materials recommended at the end of this paper, reevaluate your philosophy concerning reading and reading instruction. Be especially critical of current "reading readiness" programs!

5. Treat children as readers when they enter school. Let them know that they are already readers, you are going to help them become better readers. And finally,

6. Most teachers of young children agree with Piaget and Montessori's theories of learning, not only because they seem logical, but because those theories have been proven over and over through the direct observation of young children. Don't let current political pressures for higher standardized test scores overshadow all that we have learned from Piaget concerning the cognitive development of children and from Montessori regarding the dignity of the young child.

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USING TELEVISION TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

by
Rebecca T. Isbell
Director of Child Study Center
Model Program for Young Children
and Jean C. Flanigan, Director of
Instructional Media of East Tennessee
State University in Johnson City, Tennessee

USING TELEVISION TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

For the young child, language acquisition is a primary developmental task. Language is a tool for labeling the world, for interaction with self and others, and for conceptualizing thought. The language foundation established in the early years provides the basis for future intellectual development and activity.

Throughout history, the primary language influence on young children has been the family, the neighbors, the people in their immediate environment. But in recent decades the formidable medium of television has intruded as a significant influence on children's language development and an influence to extend their world. While television is a tool for language expansion, it also is a hindrance to interactive language. Understanding how television influences language development, how children perceive television, and what kinds of language experiences young children need can enable parents and teachers to maximize the positive influence of television.

Television has a significant effect on the language development of young children because of the amount of time they spend watching it. According to the Nielson Television Index, preschoolers spend about 54 hours per week watching TV (Cline). By the time of high school graduation, the average child has spent 11,000 hours in classrooms and 15,000 hours watching television (Postman). Any activity which occupies so much time in the lives of children exerts a tremendous impact on every aspect of their development.

But the child's language involvement with television is very different from person-to-person involvement. Television viewing is a passive activity.

The child cannot interact with the television, and television viewing often discourages interactive communication.

Television exposes children to a wider range of experience than would otherwise be likely. This broadened experience can mean enhanced vocabulary development, particularly in terms of labeling their enlarged world. The advantage of vocabulary enrichment from television is a positive influence on beginning readers, but does not show continued gain after age ten (Trelease).

Like the people around a child, television offers language models for the child to imitate. These models range widely in the degree of their vocabulary diversity and language complexity. The influence of many of the models is intensified by repetition and by accompanying theme music and laugh tracks as well as by powerful visual imagery.

Because of the amount of time devoted to it, television influences language development by the fact of what it excludes in the lives of children. In addition to discouraging family conversation, television excludes play, which means less imaginative use of language and limited interaction with peers. In many families, television watching occupies time that might otherwise be spent in reading aloud or other interactive communication.

The nature of the television medium is so different from the activities it displaces that the language experience is altered significantly. According to Dorothy and Jerome Singer, the special qualities of television include its attention demanding properties, its rapid pace of brief sequences, and its strong visual orientation. Thus, children who spend much of their time watching television are missing opportunities for extended interpersonal dialogues, for reflection and absorption of events

and experiences, and for developing mental imagery in response to auditory stimulus.

The differences between television viewing and other activities are further heightened by the ways children perceive what they see on TV. Most television programming is designed for adults, who have many more experiences to relate to program content than do children. The emphasis on problems and conflicts of adult living has the impact of hurrying children past the concerns of childhood and into worrying about adult issues (Elkind).

Young children also have difficulty in distinguishing fantasy and reality on TV. One study (Quarforth) showed that not until second grade were a majority of children able to differentiate human from animated and puppet characters. Another study (Snow) of preadolescent children showed that they were able to distinguish cartoons as make-believe and news programs as real, but had difficulty deciding about situation comedies. The cognitive development level of young children is such that they believe everything they see on television to be real, and they interpret everything theysee in a literal understanding, unable to draw abstract conclusions.

Children's language competence is determined largely by their having practice with and exposure to certain kinds of language experiences. They must hear and use language within a meaningful context in order to develop a sense of the functions of language -- to communicate feelings; to relate with other people; to identify, explain, describe the world (Strickler & Farr). They must be involved in a social context in which there is an interchange of ideas, so that children can question and seek clarification and reinforcement of their understanding. They need opportunities to voice,

their own thoughts and feelings, and to have their opinions valued and accepted by others. They need a continuous environment of responsive communication which they can influence. They need frequent opportunities for spontaneous imaginative play in order to experiment with a variety of role possibilities and life situations.

Because so much of children's time today is occupied by television, many of them are missing natural opportunities for these developmental experiences. Yet, children need not be abandoned to the mercies of their TV-viewing habits. Children can be encouraged to be selective about what they watch; they can be taught critical viewing skills; and television can be used as the subject matter for "Conversation that is meaningful and sufficiently personally important to command attention" (Cazden, p. 130).

Nielson polls indicate that during prime time, 70% of viewing is by an adult together with a child (Robertson). According to at least one study (Lyle & Hoffman), children often become the family decision makers in terms of program selection. If family viewing choices involve discussion - weighing individual preferences and the merits of particular programs - that activity in itself can provide a significant language learning experience for children.

Adults and children alike need to become more aware of their viewing habits. A study (Rossiter) showed that parents are concerned about what their children watch, but tend to seriously underestimate the amount of time spent in TV viewing. A TV log can assist the family in analyzing what is watched, how it is selected, the circumstances under which it is viewed, and the amount of time spent watching.

Adults who watch television with young children should do so in an active role. They should question children's perceptions of what is

being viewed and help clarify misunderstandings. They should help children to understand how television works, what production techniques are used to create special effects, and what the intentions of commercials are. They need to analyze television content just as they would literary content in terms of character development, credibility of plot, thematic resolution, etc. Such activities are appropriate for classroom discussion as well as for family conversation. As children develop these critical viewing skills, they become less controlled by television and more in control of what they watch.

As far as language development is concerned, the most significant requirement is "exposure to well-formed sentences in the context of conversation that is meaningful and sufficiently personally important to command attention" (Cazden, p. 130). Television as subject matter for such meaningful conversation has a unique commonality of high interest and awareness which cuts across barriers of age, education, socio-economic status, occupation, and geographic location. It is one thing about which everyone in our culture knows and has opinions. Children need to be encouraged to communicate with others about what they see on TV by discussing and evaluating the content and characters.

That television plays a significant role in the lives of young children is an established fact. Whether its influence on the language development of children is positive or negative depends on parents and teachers becoming aware of how television influences language experiences young children need and on parents and teachers taking an active role in helping their children to have constructive language involvement related to television.

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PLAY: A NATURAL MEDIUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by
Cindy F. Davis
Therapeutic Recreation Specialist
and Richard Brice, Associate Professor
of Early Childhood Education of The
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

PLAY: A NATURAL MEDIUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In attempting to keep pace with the developing technology of our computerized era, society is placing more and more demand on the quality and quantity of early education. In response to these pressures, parents and teachers often project anxieties about their children's future successes, pressuring them to master academics at an early age and underestimating the value of play as a medium for learning. Mainly due to the influence of the Puritan work ethic engrained in our value system, emphasis is placed on the importance of work and production - primarily an adult role. Hard work is deemed as "good" and leisure as its "reward." Play then is seen as of secondary importance in the lives of most adults. We not only have a tendency to devalue play in our own lives, but sub-consciously project these values into those of our children. As educated adults we can help children retain their childhood by purposefully studying the realm of play as a medium for learning and recognizing its relevance as an alternative to a traditional work approach to early childhood education.

Play as a Medium for Learning

When we impose limitations on children's play we are overlooking some very basic characteristics of learning in early childhood. Frederick Froebel, the father of our present day kindergarten, spoke of play as "The natural unfolding of the germinal leaves of childhood" (Sponseller, 1974). Childhood is the stage in a person's life when one is free of adult responsibilities. Children are both able and interested in using their time and energy to explore, create, observe and react to the world. From the work of Jean Piaget we know that children naturally practice

manipulating their environment, synthesizing and operationalizing their findings in an attempt to understand themselves and their environment (Sponseller, 1974). A noted psychologist, Brian Sutton-Smith, refers to play as self-motivated activity with pleasure and purpose inherent within. Play reflects internal control whereby rules and directions are determined by the player and/or activity as it develops. Because rules and obstacles are created by children at play they can likewise be changed by them in order to maintain control and mastery leading to self-worth (Neumann, 1971). "Play represents a world in which the child can be master of whatever he chooses. No matter that physical objects stubbornly obey natural laws, in his imagination they can do whatever he desires" (Sponseller, 1974).

From a Piagetian perspective, we acknowledge play as the intellectual activity of representation through which children re-create the outside world and use assimilation and accommodation to manipulate the elements within (Sponseller, 1974). Paralleling the Piagetian perspective, Sutton-Smith states that the varying of responses of children during play increases their range of associations for objects and uses for them. Such interaction with objects increases the child's repertoire of responses and cognitions thus leading to more creative responses. Play also helps children develop the ability to adopt representational sets (Sutton-Smith, 1973).

Play then, is the medium by which children undertake most direct learning. Thought, comprehension, evaluation and synthesis of knowledge are all elements of play that function as strengthening devices in building capacity for intelligence. Language, mathematics and science concepts, for example, are natural by-products of learning through play. Play is content free, with all learning involving affective, psychomotor and cog-

nitive domains. Higher levels of learning including analysis, synthesis and evaluation take place during play. According to Piaget, play connects sensorimotor intelligence and operational thought and "is the basis of all higher forms of mental activity" (Sponseller, 1974).

Play is essential to the development of problem-solving skills. In play children are encouraged to make decisions through active exploration. Testing reality by creating and recreating, children develop cognitive skills and self-awareness leading to an internal "locus-of-control" with the ability to identify problems and hypothesize solutions (Sponseller, 1974).

Vgotsky labelled play as a social activity or form of communication for boys and girls. Children at play are learning to communicate via language, gestures and symbolic thinking, leading to more advanced abilities of thinking abstractly and logically (Segal, 1981). Play also serves as a medium for expression of understanding and misconceptions of information obtained from various roles through role reversal. Social skills involving cooperative interaction are learned, as youngsters develop respect and sensitivity towards peers. Self-development is the primary goal of the play-oriented educational approach to learning (Sponseller, 1974).

A Work Vs. Play Approach

From a deeper understanding of the many facts of play, then it becomes obvious that play is the medium by which children most naturally define their world. Traditionally, in our culture, however, as children move out of the preschool stage and into the primary grades of school, they are quickly influenced by societal pressures and values. No longer is play legitimate during class time or are toys encouraged as educational props.

Instead of actively participating in the day's activities, students find reward in sitting passively at desks encouraged to listen and memorize information presented by their teacher. Classroom learning involves recall, recognition, comprehension, and application with textbooks, worksheets, and teacher presentation as media for learning. Formal testing remains the primary source of assessment. Listening skills are given great importance in school success as are accurate direction following and prompt memorization. The acquisition of content is primary, with emphasis placed on knowledge level learning. Success and mastery go hand in hand with convergent learning. The teacher takes on an "all knowing" status, encouraging students to look to her for answers rather than seeking answers out themselves.

As play becomes separated from academics, it is often extended or reduced as a basis for reward/punishment. How many times have we made children miss playtime as punishment for misbehavior during class time? By using play in this fashion we begin instilling in our children the value that play is indeed of secondary importance to school work (work in general) and is an earned priviledge, instead of a necessary component of healthy living. As we have learned from the past work of behavioral psychologists, people are conditioned to respond in certain ways to stimulus and reward. Here we see the beginning of "work-focused" lifestyles for children with positive reinforcement allocated in the form of play. As youngsters grow into adulthood, they no longer value play with equal importance to work. They are now conditioned to identify work as a requirement and play as an elective. We can see the results of such lopsided development in the unbalanced lives of much of our adult population. Unable to balance work time with leisure, and with a lack of

skill development in the leisure area, adults shy away from free time, unable to utilize it constructively.

Because of the emphasis on convergent learning in childhood with little skill development in the area of divergent learning, adults find themselves unable to actively participate in seeking out answers for themselves. They find it necessary to look to a higher source for a sense of direction. No longer is the "all-knowing" teacher readily available. Instead children, now of adult status, find themselves ill-prepared to function as independent decision-makers. Their creative abilities are concealed by inhibitions. Lack of direction and "floundering" in adulthood reflects the inadequacies of our educational system in its failure to give necessary importance to self-development in the life state labelled "childhood".

Adults Who Help Children Retain Their Childhood

With the reins of society pulling children out of childhood and subjecting them to the traditional work oriented learning environment how can we as educated adults help keep children in childhood? We can begin by supporting and valuing childhood as a very legitimate state in itself as well as a preparatory stage for adulthood. With a deeper understanding and respect for the importance of play in children's learning, we can move confidently towards creating a more conducive learning environment for our children, with play as the primary educational approach to learning. As educators we must actively defend the rights of our children to receive the most appropriate form of education available. By preparing ourselves to openly discuss and provide evidence of the cognitive values of play, we can begin to help the general public understand the need for re-assessment of our traditional "work-oriented" approach to education.

By reducing the use of highly structured activities and punitive disciplinary tactics in the classroom, we open the door for use of various levels of play as mediums for learning. Play may include free play, guided play, and directed play, all useful as techniques for teaching. Free play often results in discovery learning. Guided play leads to guided discovery learning, while directed play can be an effective basis for receptive learning.

The role of the teacher becomes one of a "fellow problem-solver". She or he acts as a model for students by suggesting ways to test hypotheses under various circumstances. Using questioning as a facilitative tool, the teacher encourages students to justify their reasoning. In doing so, children build confidence in themselves as decision-makers and as the primary directors of their own thoughts and actions. The teacher/child relationship moves towards one of mutual respect. The teacher recognizes students as individuals with unique experiential backgrounds involving personal needs and interests. Observation, assessment, and goal-setting become the primary role of the teacher.

By eliminating the use of play as a manipulatory device (reward/punishment), we acknowledge the necessity of play in healthy human development. When we, as role models, place value in continuing to play as adults our children will begin to accept these values as well. Perhaps as the result of a creative play-oriented approach to learning they will be better prepared to function independently with a feeling of confidence in themselves as adults and as primary decision-makers. By focusing our methods of early childhood education on the needs of our children, we are affording them the right to childhood with a more useful and natural preparation for their later adult roles. We are also meeting the increasing demand of society for quality education.

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TEACHER PLEASE! I NEED TO DO IT MYSELF: PROMOTING MORAL REASONING IN CHILDREN

by
Marshall A. Brooks
Associate Professor and
Chairperson of the Education Department
North Carolina Wesleyan College

"TEACHER PLEASE! I NEED TO DO IT MYSELF"
Promoting Moral Reasoning in Children

Not too long ago I was in a classroom of five year olds. I was there to observe a student teacher. It was early in the morning, a few minutes before school was to begin. As the children came into the room they put their coats and snacks away and then joined their friends who were playing in one of the centers. The other adults in the classroom were busy making preparations for the day, leaving me free to observe and mingle with the children. I had not been in the room but a few minutes when one of the children, a little girl named LaTisha, came up to me and said, "Tosha won't let me play with the cards." "Why is that?" I asked. "She says that there are not enough cards for me to play with." "Well is there something else you would like to do?" "No, I want to play with the cards. Will you tell Tosha to give them to me?"

When with children, I find that this kind of conflict is not unusual. How we as early childhood educators respond in this type of situation depends on several things. Decisions about how and when to intervene in conflicts between children should be guided by an awareness that children develop the ability to solve their problems by actually solving problems as they occur. It is through this problem solving process, in which the exchange of viewpoints occurs, that children are helped in their ability to think through issues that involve right and wrong.

This ability to judge right from wrong, or moral reasoning, has long been the concern of both parents and teachers. Morality has been defined as action that conforms to socially determined standards of right behavior (Berkowitz, 1964). One's reasons for acting morally, and the kinds of motivation required to act morally, change with time and experience

in a predictable way (Stengel, 1982). This particular view of morality is known as "cognitive-developmental."

The fact that children apparently pass through certain developmental stages or levels of reasoning was the interest of Jean Piaget when he published his work The Moral Judgement of the Child in 1932. In his study, Piaget analyzed the responses that elementary age children gave after being presented with pairs of stories in which a child had done something "wrong." He concluded that there were two basic types of moral reasoning. Younger children, he observed, saw rules as sacred pronouncements handed down by some external authority. Moral wrongness for the young child was defined in terms of what was forbidden or punished. Piaget termed this first stage of moral development "moral realism."

Piaget's approach to studying children's moral reasoning was to present pairs of stories to children and ask them to discuss them. An example typical of these stores is the following pair (Piaget, 1932):

> There was a little boy called Julian. His father had gone out and Julian thought it would be fun to play with his father's ink-pot. First he played with the pen, and then he made a little blot on the table cloth.
>
> A boy who was called Augustus, once noticed that his father's ink-pot was empty. One day, when his father was away, he thought of filling the ink-pot so as to help his father so that he should find it full when he came home. But while he was opening the ink bottle he made a big blot on the table cloth.

What Piaget found was that the younger children's thinking process was literal, making no allowance for motives or intentions. Thus, the younger children maintained that Augustus was more guilty than Julian because he had made a bigger blot. They took no account of the fact that Julian was misbehaving and that Augustus was trying to help his father.

Older children, usually twelve or more, were able to consider the wrong doer's intentions when evaluating guilt. Piaget called this latter

stage of reasoning "moral relativism."

As a result of twenty years of research, Lawerence Kohlberg, who studied Piaget's theories as a graduate student in the 1950's, has expanded on Piaget's original studies. Kohlberg (1981) sees moral reasoning progressing through three levels, with each level consisting of one or more stages. Children under nine typically fall into what he calls the level of "preconventional morality." It is preconventional because they do not really understand the conventions or rules of society. Within this first level are two stages: the stage of "punishment-obedience" and the stage of "instrumental relativist." In the punishment-obedience stage, goodness or badness is determined by physical consequences; that is, something is good if it brings rewards and bad if it results in punishment. While in the instrumental relativist stage, the child will reason that an action is good if it is instrumental in satisfying one's own needs or if it involves an even exchange. This latter stage is often described as "you scratch my back and I will scratch yours."

Usually about the time a child is nine, the transition between the first level of preconventional to the next level of "conventional morality" will occur. Kohlberg describes this second level as the time when the individual's reasoning is based on the conventions of rules of society. The last level, "post conventional morality," is attained only by a few adults. It is called post conventional because the moral principles that underlie the conventions of a society are understood.

For all practical purposes early childhood educators deal primarily with children who are operating in Kohlberg's first level of moral reasoning, that of preconventional morality (Reimer 1983). Given this, and the fact that children must pass through one level of moral reasoning before they can get to the next, it follows that teachers should be seeking

strategies to employ in the classroom that will enhance children's moral development. The question naturally arises then, "What do we know about promoting the development of moral reasoning?"

Kohlberg has suggested that if children are exposed to reasoning one stage higher than their own, the growth process will be enhanced. Theoretically this makes sense, but in actual application it requires the teacher to always know, when a moral issue arises, the appropriate response for each child. It also demands that the teacher be present in order to be able to give the appropriate response. A more practical application of Kohlberg's theory would be to give children ways of dealing with meaningful dilemmas as they arise which would insure that they take into consideration the viewpoints of others as well as to make their own viewpoints seen.

I saw an approach that was something akin to this description demonstrated very effectively some years ago. It was a period during which my work took me to many kindergarten and primary classrooms. One of these classrooms was taught by a team of two teachers, and they had approximately fifty-six five year olds. The teachers had worked together for several years and were continually attempting to make both curriculum and instruction as relevant to the developmental characteristics of that age child as well as to the traits of the individual children in their class.

One day, in November, I stopped by this class. It was my first visit of the fall to this particular school. The teachers and children were at recess on the school's playground. As I stood there chatting with the teachers I happened to notice, across the playground, that one of the boys, with a stick in his hand, was chasing one of the girls. In a short time the girl approached one of the teachers and said: "Frankie is trying to hit me with a stick." To my surprise, rather than go after Frankie, the

teacher told the little girl to go tell Frankie what he was doing and how it made her, the little girl, feel. I watched as the girl ran across the playground, got Frankie's attention, and delivered her message as he stood there listening. They then parted, each going his and her separate ways.

In response to my inquiry about what I had just witnessed, the teachers explained that since the first of the year they had been working with the children to develop this approach to resolving conflicts that arose during school time. The process was that when one of the children was having a problem with something another classmate was doing, the child was to tell the other what he/she was doing and how that made the child feel. The expectation for the classmate who was being confronted was to stop doing what ever he or she was doing and to listen to what the child had to say. In initiating this approach, the teachers would stand near the pair of children to make sure that the message was communicated.

What is so appropriate about this simple strategy is that is offers a structure for children to attempt to resolve conflicts in a nonpunitive atmosphere, while the adult intervenes in a supporting role, not as the problem solver. Perhaps this approach is not suited to every classroom situation or even to every classroom. Yet, it does offer a model that meets the conditions for enhancing moral reasoning and self-reliance.

From these and other observations, my strategy for children should include the following characteristics:

1. The adults should be mediators. They should not try to solve children's problems for them when there is a good chance that they can work them out for themselves.

2. Autonomy grows out of children constructing moral values for themselves. The use of punishment and reward in resolving conflicts between children should be avoided as much as possible. Punishment increases children's dependency on adults and tends not to stimulate the constructive exchange of points of view between children.

3. A structure should be provided for children to share viewpoints with one another. Included within the structure is the expectation that children are to treat each other with respect.

For children, the ability to resolve conflicts and to decide appropriately between right and wrong, comes from the opportunity to practice these skills in meaningful situations. If we are to value and work to promote the autonomy of individuals to reason for themselves, then we must give the children in our care these opportunities. We must help them live fully through their childhood and not be robbed of the valuable experiences available through interactions with peers.

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THEY ARE CHILDREN FIRST

by
Phyllis R. Chalk
and Joyce B. Kirchin
Preschool Satellite Program
for the Hearing Impaired
Charlotte, North Carolina

THEY ARE CHILDREN FIRST

"Insecure...unhappy...frightened...and I am only a preschooler. Life with my family sure is different now. I wonder what I did that was so wrong. It must have been terrible, since my parents seem not to love me anymore. They treat me so differently and hardly ever involve me with the family activities. I wonder if they are ashamed of me. I really thought I was a cute kid. Mommy and Daddy seldom smile at me anymore. I can't imagine why I make Mommy cry so much. One thought does comfort me - what life was like BEFORE.....

Mommy and Daddy were so happy when I was born. I had all my little 'pink' toes and fingers (I know, because they counted them several times a day). Clothes and blankets were soft and warm, but what really felt good was to be wrapped in my parents' arms. I really was a 'bouncing' baby because I 'bounced' back and forth in their arms. Love was wonderful. It didn't matter if I was wet, hungry or uncomfortable, all it took was a special cry and Mommy was there. She had such a nice smile and a very tender kiss. Laughter filled our home daily. I could tell that by their expressions. I must have been a real show off with all my infant/toddler antics. Crawling was fun, but I really caused excitement when I started pulling up and cruising around the house (that is, bumping and falling like a roly-poly). However, what made Mommy and Daddy really laugh and smile until it seemed they would 'pop' was the day I walked all by myself. That definitely was a memorable moment. I could tell they were proud of me and loved me very much. Whenever I felt good or made my parents happy, I would coo and babble.

I started noticing that Mommy would become upset when I didn't respond to her when she entered the room. (But how could I? She was so

far behind me and I could not see her). Her smiles and kisses were comforting, but the other funny movements she made with her mouth were puzzling. And when I didn't respond to those mouth movements, her expression would change as if she didn't approve or understand.

One day Mommy and Daddy took me to a familiar place. It was my favorite doctor's office. After the doctor finished with me, he shook Daddy's hand and patted Mommy's shoulder. My parents had strange expressions on their faces. The next day they took me to a different place. It was not my favorite doctor's office. After this man finished with me, he sat down to talk with my parents. Mommy started crying and Daddy looked as if someone had just hurt him terribly. Both of them had very sad eyes when they looked at me and their touch was shaky and cold.

Now that I think back, the shocking turn of events was when the man said 'Your CHILD is deaf' and my parents heard 'Your child is DEAF'."

It is our philosophy that the hearing impaired child is a child first and secondly, is a child with a handicap. It is with this understanding that our program for hearing impaired children consists of a developmental curriculum for the children and their parents.

When a hearing impaired child enters our program, we don't see the child as an object of pity - "poor little deaf child" - we see him/her as a child with the same basic needs and the same potential for success as a child who is not hearing impaired. We have realistic expectations for the child.

Physical allowances are made for the child's inability to hear (for example, not being able to get his/her attention when the child's back is turned or when she/he is too far away), but we don't expect the child to be unable to do what other children do because she/he is hearing impaired. Because we have this philosophy, visitors walking into our center would

not realize from what they saw that ours was not a program for the neighborhood children.

Our classrooms are very attractive and look like a place any child would enjoy being. The children look just like any other group of small children, playing with toys, blocks, art materials, or books. The children are having fun and are actively involved in learning. When one takes a closer look, one notices the hearing aids the children are wearing and that activities are structured to work on the child's speech and language development within a framework of experiences that are meaningful to the child.

A hearing impaired child needs the same variety of early childhood experiences as all other children. The child needs to be praised for his achievements. The child needs to learn self-control and social skills. The child needs to be given the chance to learn from mistakes. The child must be given the opportunity to grow as other children. The basic needs of a child must be met along with the special needs of a hearing impaired child.

In our preschool program, full of other hearing impaired children, the individual child finds him/herself treated as a child first. The child is accepted as an individual and is special as a person. The child is valued and loved. The child is given opportunities to succeed and to feel good about him/herself. The way the child feels about him/herself will have influence throughout life. Helping the child develop a good self-image is our most important task.

Play is vital to the emotional well-being of the child. Young children learn best by experiencing things firsthand, by manipulating concrete materials to discover relationships, by interacting with others. The child

sorting blocks by color and shape is developing visual discrimination skills. The child playing a game is learning to follow directions. The non-pressured play environment is an ideal one for children to learn in. Play allows a child to carry on trial and error activities without fear of making mistakes. It provides the child with the opportunity to practice newly acquired skills, to reach ou' and try new things, or to develop creativity. Play allows the child to understand and control his environment.

As play is the most natural way for a child to develop and grow, to learn about his/her world, and to develop new skills, we see play as the natural mode of learning for the hearing impaired child. We capitalize on play in meeting the child's basic needs and in providing the auditory training, speech development, and language development that must be stressed in the hearing impaired child's program.

In order for a young child's developmental curriculum to be effective, there must be carry-over in the child's home. Parent education encompasses a large part of our programming. It is essential to first understand the painful psychological/emotional reactions experienced by parents when their child is diagnosed as handicapped. The initial response is shock which quickly transforms into denial. Denial is followed by a series of stressful experiences surrounded by a mixture of strong and conflicting emotions including guilt, blame, fear, embarrassment, disappointment, sadness, anxiety, mourning, identity crises, isolation, anger and the loss of confidence, competence and self-esteem.

All of these ongoing responses tend to disturb the balance of the parents' ability to realistically set goals for their child. Unrealistic expectations can be devastating to the child (as well as the parent) and

his/her identity. Low expectations lend themselves to low achievements and subsequent dependency on others. Extremely high expectations tend to manifest severe frustrations and the feeling of having to work so hard for what appears to be so little.

More often than not, the pain and anger experienced by parents of a recently diagnosed handicapped child is directed inward to themselves. These emotional responses eventually work their way to the child. The child experiences feelings of rejection. Accompanying those feelings is a definite suggestion of being "different" (a negative emotional response) as opposed to being "special" (a positive emotional response). Being "special" is important for a child to obtain his/her full potential as a human - an entity - a real person.

Our program staff serves multiple roles - teacher, counselor, friend, etc. In order to help the parents in our program, we must be GOOD listeners. It is important to help guide the parents in developing special skills in dealing with their child and his/her handicap. Parents need a lot of support and reinforcement because a hearing impairment has many devastating implications on the family, friends, and community, and the respective relationships with the child.

Considering all of the implications of a hearing impairment (which cannot possibly be dealt with in this article), it is vital for the program professional to assist the parents with an essential practical philosophy. We attempt to help the parents accept themselves and their child FIRST! Secondly, they can learn to deal with the handicap and its manifestations on a day-to-day basis.

RECAP: The hearing impaired child is a child <u>first</u> and <u>secondly</u>, a child with a handicap.

The Charlotte Preschool Satellite Program for the Hearing Impaired is one in a network of satellite classes covering the entire state of North Carolina and is funded through the Department of Human Resources, North Carolina School for the Deaf. The program operates on a ten month school year.

The Preschool Satellite Program serves children from birth to age five. Presently there are three classes serving children in the classroom five days a week in Charlotte, North Carolina. Each classroom is staffed with a teacher and a teacher's aide with a maximum class size of seven children. Most of the children, ages two to five, are involved in the center-based program. Younger children are usually served in the home, day care center, etc. Scheduling for the center-based program and the home-based program is done on an individual basis.

The Preschool Satellite Program provides an enriched program of early child development with emphasis on developing language communication skills. The program's educational modality is total communication which consists of oral/aural habilitation and comprehensive language development. Support services include a speech teacher who works with each child twice a week, classes for parents, individual parent counseling and educational programs, and a parent library. Other resources available are an audiologist and an occupational therapist. The hearing impaired children in the center-based program are integrated on a regular basis with the hearing children enrolled at the Child Development Center in which the Preschool Satellite Program for the Hearing Impaired is located.

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Addendum Note:

The views, opinions, and philosophies expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the North Carolina School for the Deaf. This article is more a reflection of the personal/professional experiences of the authors. Phyllis R. Chalk and Joyce B. Kirchin, M.S., Preschool Satellite Program for the Hearing Impaired, 1000 E. Morehead Street, Charlotte, N. C. 28204

ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN

by
Bobbie H. Rowland
State President of NC-AEYC
College of Human Development and Learning
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Advocacy for Children

"When we are able to free our children to be open to their wide range of personal needs, as well as to the wide range of environmental and social demands, the result will be a group of positive, forward-moving, constructive human beings."--

(Paraphrased from Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming by Carl R. Rogers)

Advocacy is a response to a unified cry from many groups and individuals to invest time and effort into seeking a fair opportunity for all children. In this time of budget cuts, public policy decision-making, and debate of fundamental philosophical issues, Advocacy efforts serve as arenas for debate and dialogue. Recently I heard Neil Postman, author of The Disappearance of Childhood (1982), speaking of the dilemmas of children in this land of instant success, instant credit, and instant pudding. Children, so to speak, have been lumped into non-descript balls of clay. Their own childishness has been challenged by those who feel the need to "straighten things out," "get things in shape," etc. In essence they have been asked to give up "childhood."

The framework for working for children and childhood in a nurturing, supportive manner is one that groups such as NAEYC* can model and evaluate. It's time to be accountable, not with test results and production charts, but by maximizing the power of persons. There is a need for pooling the talents and resources in our national, state, and local communities for the best possible collaborative efforts for children.

*National Association for the Education of Young Children

The widespread concern for children and their families can develop into a well informed body of individuals using an Advocacy Model as a primary mode of operation. The model differs from the medical model in that it looks first at the sources of power and attempts to provide adequate debate, information, and examination of the critical areas of need for children and their families on the local, state, and national levels. Specifically it educates the general public to immediate needs and suggests possible solutions to problems.

These voices for children have the capability of organizing community group action and joining in chorus with the voices of many other individuals. As effective advocates, the need to know what is going on is accomplished by careful study and investigation. Committees and task forces assimilate information and pass it on quickly to people who will act on it.

Recently at an affiliate Leadership Conference in Washington, D. C., the content of NAEYC's Advocacy efforts were defined. A consensus was reached that the goal of NAEYC's public policy program should be to advocate on behalf of all children to ensure quality environments. Three types of environment were defined (Affiliate Group Leadership Conference, 1982):

1. The general physical environment that affects the health, welfare, and learning ability of children. Examples include air and water quality, toxic waste, and nuclear radiation, etc.

2. The out-of-home environment which includes licensing; center accreditation; consistency and sufficiency of funding; staff training, qualifications, and benefits; and parent involvement.

3. The home environment including parent education; child nutrition; the "hurried child" syndrome; and awareness of potential abuse of T.V., videogames, computers, etc.

This conference represented a way of coordinating efforts at local, state, and national levels by an organization dedicated to young children to enhance the quality of life for young children and their families. Such meetings are necessary if the Advocacy Model is to be effective.

The major sources of energy needed for Advocacy efforts come from the "individuals" themselves. Their high interests coupled with a capacity to invest in children result in careful planning and action. No task can be too great or too small to gain the Advocates' attention and source. Carefully planned approaches must be used to identify the needs of the children and the gaps in the various service delivery systems.

The Advocates' work never ends. Children unable to vote and unable to speak or lobby for themselves need a strong and effective voice which will remain vigilent and strong. As local, state, and national policies change there will be the need to monitor the resulting effects. But, the primary role for the advocate is to pursue and strengthen investments in children and to explore alternative ways for offering positive programs and services to children and their families.

Advocacy, by definition and practice, is <u>biased</u> in favor of children. From private charitable acts to organized community projects, individuals reach out with caring skills and vigorous persistence. Working hard and assuming awesome responsibilities, advocates affirm

the policies and principles of investment in children - an investment which promises significant gains and benefits for our future.

When it comes right down to it, Advocacy means having to examine priorities and interests. All our children, yours and mine, are a natural resource and have the right to grow to be healthy, functioning, and productive citizens. Public policy ought to encourage and support this growth, and private policy ought to ensure that any gaps or omissions are promptly identified and provided for.

For any movement or change Advocacy demands a high level of involvement and commitment. Emotional commitment, "the feeling that something is wrong and someone needs to do something about it," has to be superseded by an intellectual level which requires an understanding of the historical significance of the change being advocated. Accurate information must be developed and presented in the most rational way. A network for information gathering and dissemination allowing for quick and responsive action helps to achieve maximum results.

Finally, an essential element for Advocacy is to broaden the base of support for children and their families. For too long we have been talking to ourselves or to others like us. There is a need to establish a linkage to groups, to the community, and to society in general. Through careful planning we can build a constituency for the most important issues and more effectively reach the general public. We must include business and civic leaders, religious institutions, city and county leaders, and educators in coalition building. Systems, such as these, which invest in children need a structure to hold things together. Although diverse, they are interdependent and can present unified positions toward common goals. This kind of unity is power and cannot easily be ignored.

The goals are clear. The basic necessities for children and their families must be guaranteed. We must hold decision makers, on all levels, accountable for their choices and priorities. We must study, plan, monitor, and evaluate on a continuing basis. We must deal honestly and with competence. As we focus our energies to deal with emerging issues and concerns we can foster a strengthening of the public and private sectors and plan, emphatically, for non-partisan decisions which affect the lives of our precious children--our hope for the future.

You are my hope
I am your future
I want to learn,
and grow, and play.
I need you near me
I beg you, hear me
Please stand up for me,
Today.

(Tune "You Are My Sunshine")

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Appendix

Advocacy Issues for the 80's include:

- -Value to Society of Quality Early Childhood Programs for All Children
- -Day Care Licensing Standards for Quality Care
- -Afterschool Care for School Age Children
- -Teenage Parenting
- -Corporal Punishment in School and Group Settings
- -Adequate Funding for Children's Services and Schooling
- -Foster Care Services
- -Local, State, and National Governments' Commitment to Children
- -Maternal and Child Health Care
- -Educational Rights for Handicapped Children
- -Employed Parents and Their Children
- -Nuclear Freeze